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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 002723

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STATE FOR SCA/FO, SCA/A, S/CRS, SCA/PAB, S/CT, EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76 POLAD
TREASURY FOR D/S KIMMITT, APARAMESWARAN, AJEWELL
REL NATO/ISAF/AS/NZ

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2026

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SUBJECT: CODEL HAYES MEETS KARZAI, WARDAK

Classified By: AMBASSADOR RONALD NEUMANN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: On May 31, Congressmen Robin Hayes (R-NC), Joe Wilson (R-SC), Jeff Miller (R-FL), Richard Keller (R-FL), and Henry Cuellar (D-TX), and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX) met separately with Defense Minister Wardak and President Karzai. The President blamed the recent disturbances in Kabul on disaffected "thugs", lamenting the lack of trained police equipped to respond appropriately as well as the slanted news coverage of the events. Karzai was exercised about Pakistan's refusal, at a recent NAM meeting, to support a resolution banning the provision of safe haven to Taliban. He said he had agreed to keep a low public profile regarding the GOP, but if results were not forthcoming within 2 or 3 months, such a policy would have to be reconsidered. The President encouraged the U.S. to engage in face to face talks with Iran, whose population is largely pro-American. Minister Wardak requested more air and communications support for the ANA in order to speed up the timetable for U.S. troops' withdrawal. End Summary.

12. (C) Karzai opened the meeting by discussing his trip to Iran, where he was invited to address the Iranian Chamber of Commerce, in front of an audience of more than 800 business people. After he spoke to them, Karzai reported, they crowded around him, each trying to get an individual business license to operate in Afghanistan.

13. (C) Recent Disturbances in Kabul: Karzai blamed the situation on "the weaknesses of our own institutions," saying that he had called the Coalition and ISAF and told them not to engage, as the GOA could handle it themselves. He also attributed much of the violence to "thugs and thieves" who were out for personal gain by stealing cars and looting.

Karzai lamented the lack of sufficient, well-trained riot police. The Minister of Interior told him that the police "either shoot or run away." There are only 170 trained riot police for a city of four million, and they have no non-lethal crowd control equipment such as riot shields or water cannons. He told the Congress members that he had been working all day to put more peaceful means of handling riots in place, and consulting with "everyone," especially in Parliament. "They all said, 'Mr. President, get your security forces in order.'" Karzai said he had issued a strong statement in support of the U.S. He went on at length about the irresponsibility of the media, particularly the local television networks, complaining that they had not given a balanced portrayal of the situation, even the national station, which is "supposed to be working for me." Karzai said he had received a condolence call from President Bush, and that his message would be passed to the Afghan people.

¶4. (C) The delegation then discussed their meetings in Pakistan with President Musharraf and Finance Minister Shah, which Congressman Hayes described as "very positive." Karzai talked about rising exports from Pakistan to Afghanistan (projected to be USD 1.5 billion this year) and from Iran to Afghanistan, currently USD 500 million annually, both greatly increased from Taliban times. Congressman Hayes said that he had told President Musharraf that the U.S. appreciated his assistance in the war against terror, but expected that he would do more.

¶5. (C) Karzai spoke excitedly about the Non-Aligned Movement foreign ministers' meeting in Malaysia, saying that

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they had proposed a resolution banning any country from providing refuge to the Taliban. Out of over 55 countries present, Pakistan was the only one to oppose the resolution; such public opposition was a "blatant" sign that they intended to keep on providing safe haven. Congressman Hayes promised to express our strong displeasure with this action to the Pakistanis.

¶6. (C) Congresswoman Jackson Lee asked the President for his thoughts on Pakistan, given the precarious government there, and for advice for the U.S. in dealing with Iran. Karzai said he had decided, in consultation with others, not to speak publicly against Pakistan (although he may pay a political price with the Afghan population, who wonder why he is not being more vocal when attacks continue) for the next two or three months (later he suggested a month and a half), but to engage in quiet negotiations. If there are no results after that period, however, "we will have to consult and find a different strategy." The Afghan people, he went on, believe that the U.S. has the power to stop Pakistan from harboring Taliban, and are confused when no progress is made. Regarding Iran, Karzai said the GOI was "very much with us on the counter-narcotics fight." While Iran is publicly anti-American, the population (the young people, the business community) want a relationship with the U.S. "It's good for the U.S. also to engage Iran," as it is a country with tremendous resources in the region, and immense national pride, Karzai said, suggesting that the two countries just sit down and talk.

¶7. (C) In answer to a question from Congressman Miller, Karzai said his top national concerns were continuing the fight against terrorism, counter-narcotics, and strengthening Afghan institutions - to include infrastructure such as roads and electricity. He said that Afghanistan "absolutely" was interested in encouraging private investment in the electricity sector. In response to a question from Representative Wilson, Karzai said that GOA intelligence would have discerned whether the Government of India (GOI) was spying in the country, but that the GOI has been very generous with assistance - some USD 650 million - which was more than its economy could afford. He acknowledged that

Pakistan was concerned about India's diplomatic presence in his country, but "I told the GOP, when you close the Indian Embassy in Islamabad, I will close their consulates in Afghanistan."

18. (C) Karzai, in response to a question on increasing his government's revenues, said that Afghans were among the worst tax-payers in the world, and the GOA was focusing on increasing customs' collection, as well as from urban businesses. Dr. Naderi, the president's economic advisor who was also present, discussed ways of attracting more foreign direct investment, especially in the oil and gas and extractive industries. He suggested that the U.S. provide some incentives for American businesses to locate in Afghanistan. Ambassador Neumann then discussed the OPIC program, which is quite forward leaning in the country.

19. (C) In a separate meeting with Defense Minister Wardak, also on May 31, the minister expressed his appreciation for Congressional help, but emphasized that Afghanistan had "a long way to go" and that "we are still in the middle of a struggle." Congressman Hayes responded that the U.S. would continue to support Afghanistan and improve the country's economy, but that "we need to take home clear-cut signs of

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your actions." He also offered to help strengthen ties between the GOA and the GOP, noting the delegation's meeting the previous day with President Musharraf. The Defense Minister told Congressman Wilson that the GOA had no knowledge of GOI interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs and such meddling would certainly not be tolerated. "We won't be a proxy."

110. (C) In response to a question from Congressman Jackson Lee on when U.S. troops could be withdrawn, Wardak did not give an exact time; he noted that Afghanistan did not want to be burden on the international community, but it is located in a "tumultuous" region and had worked hard to establish strategic partnership agreements with the U.S., as well as with NATO and the U.K. Wardak stressed that Afghanistan would be able to assume the burden of its own defense more quickly if the ANA were supplied with what he termed "combat enablers," such as air and communications support. "It (providing combat enablers) is cheaper than sustaining a big coalition force and shedding your children's blood." If he had significant air power, he continued, and a "package of more firepower and mobility on the ground, one third of your troops could leave." Wardak stressed the need for facilities for the ANA so they could sustain deployments to difficult areas. They had to withdraw from areas last winter because they lacked winter quarters. The Taliban took advantage of these holes. Ambassador Neumann then noted that he had heard that the '06 supplemental budget request still in committee might have some of the USD 300 million for ANA and ANP infrastructure cut. He emphasized that this money was essential to meet the facilities that General Wardak talked about. Wardak, referring to the large amounts being spent in Iraq, said that if "we were a failure, we would have received much more aid." Congressman Wilson expressed condolences for the recent accident, asking if the violent reaction was a sign of anti-Americanism. Wardak replied the disturbances were definitely not motivated by anti-U.S. sentiment, but that certain elements that were displeased with the U.S. presence have not hesitated to take advantage of the situation.

111. (U) Codel departed post before this cable was sent and was not able to clear this message.
NEUMANN